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ABSTRACT

Despite the importance of officiating, there is little information available on how major college football officials view their sport, themselves, and their role as officials. Southeastern Conference (SEC) football officials (N=39) responded to a survey packet consisting of the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) and a four-page profile of demographic data and experiences common to all SEC officials. Comparisons were made between officials and the normative group for each of 18 variable scales on the CPI. The officials were found to score significantly higher than norms on scales assessing dominance, social presence, self-assurance, achievement via conformance, communality, and psychological mindedness. Information was also obtained on aspects of officiating that officials felt were most and least enjoyable; attributes important to good officiating; and feelings before, during, and after a ballgame. The attributes officials reported being most essential for good officiating were consistency, knowledge, ethics, self-confidence, and mental alertness. Future studies could examine the impact of instant replays; differences between football, baseball, and basketball officials; and the extent to which formal playing and coaching experience impact on the role of an athletic official. (Author/NB)

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A Personality Profile of Southeastern Conference Football Officials

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Abstract

Despite the importance of officiating, there is little information available on how major college football officials view their sport, themselves, and their role as officials. A total of 42 of 56 (75%) Southeastern Conference football officials responded to a survey requesting personality information. Comparisons were made between officials and the normative group for each of eighteen variable scales on the California Psychological Inventory. The officials were found to score significantly higher on scales assessing leadership, social presence, self-assurance, achievement via conformance, conventionality, and psychological mindedness. Information was also obtained on aspects of officiating that officials felt were most and least enjoyable, attributes important to good officiating, and feelings before, during and after a ballgame.

A Personality Profile of

Southeastern Conference Football Officials

College athletics is big business. A National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I football game may bring in as much as a million dollars on any given Saturday. As the game appreciates monetarily, the importance of officiating obviously becomes a more crucial issue. Game officials must make split second decisions that can have far reaching consequences; one call may mean the difference between a winning and a losing season.

National exposure and hundreds of thousands of dollars can be the prize for a university with a winning season. A bowl appearance or Heisman candidate can earn millions more. The effect of a winning team on alumni donations and university enrollment can be even more dramatic. Consequently, college football programs continue to grow at an unprecedented rate. Football has grown both as a game and as a business.

With so much at stake, the integrity and decision making ability of officials have become predominant issues in modern day athletics. How to monitor this aspect of the game has become a complex issue for league and university administrators. No one is more aware of this than the men who officiate the game.

Despite the importance of officiating, there have been little data gathered on how major college officials view their sport,

themselves, and their role as officials. Enforcing the rules is only part of the officiating process. An official's ability to apply technical rules to ambiguous game situations is equally important. Regardless of the criteria used, the final decision ultimately rests with the judgment of the official. How an official responds to the various judgment calls of a game may be a function of his personality.

Several researchers have identified profiles that distinguish between successful and unsuccessful college basketball officials (Alker, Straub, and Leary, 1973; Fratzke, 1975), high school officials (Ress, 1982), and professional baseball umpires (Dale, 1976), but no attempt has been made to empirically investigate the personality attributes of major college football officials.

Alker, et al. (1973) found significant differences between top rated and bottom rated officials in the Collegiate Basketball Officials Association (CBOA). A one-way analysis of variance revealed much more similarity among top rated officials than among bottom rated ones, particularly on such scales as Dominance, Responsibility, Well-Being, and Achievement via Conformance. No significant differences were found between the top rated sample of college basketball officials and a group of National Basketball Association (NBA) officials. It was reported that all officials scored significantly higher than the general population in such

areas as Self-Acceptance, Communality, and Achievement via Conformance.

Dale (1976) found more similarities than differences among umpires at the Al Somers Baseball Umpire School. He found few differences among three groups of officials: those who qualified to umpire in professional baseball, those who did not qualify to umpire in professional baseball, and those who were established major league umpires. Dale found all three groups to have significantly stronger Self-Acceptance scores when compared with the general population. The profile of major league umpires also displayed tendencies toward leadership and conformance. However, the major league officials had significantly lower scores than the other two groups on 10 of 18 variable scales, the most pronounced of which were differences in the areas of Responsibility, Tolerance, Achievement via Independence, and Flexibility.

Fratzke (1975) identified five variables that he believed distinguished between superior and average college basketball officials. The most important factor, playing experience, was followed by four characteristics commonly associated with the human personality; he found them to be "more self-sufficient, more self-assured, more self-reliant, and more sensitive to outside social demands than their average officiating counterparts" (p. 487). He did not, however, go beyond playing experience to identify other experiental factors important to good officiating.

No attempt has been made to build on the trends and perceived differences in other studies, or to incorporate them with the perceptions and experiences of officials toward their vocation. The hypothesis under investigation assumes that no difference exists between the Southeastern Conference officials raw scaled scores and those of the normative population for each of the 18 variable scales. Further, the particular profile will be examined in light of (a) self-disclosed information about the perceptions and experiences of officials relevant to officiating major college football, and (b) attributes that these college football officials believe are necessary to excel in their profession.

Method

Participants

A list of 58 registered Southeastern Conference football officials and observers was obtained from the conference headquarters in Birmingham, AL. An official is an on-sight representative of the league who enforces all pertinent policies and rules prior to, during, and immediately following a football game. The Southeastern Conference (SEC) assigns seven officials to each league game. Their positions are as follows: Referee, Umpire, Head Linesman, Line Judge, Back Judge, Side Judge, and Field Judge. An observer is a former official who views each game either on video and/or in person and rates, on a weekly basis, the performance of each official; the SEC has four observers, all of

whom were invited to participate in the study. The SEC oversees athletic competition among the following universities: Alabama, Auburn, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana State, Mississippi, Mississippi State, Tennessee, and Vanderbilt.

Each official was sent an introductory letter explaining the purpose of the study along with a return postcard on which he could indicate his willingness to participate. Only two of the 58 officials elected not to participate.

A total of 42 (75%) of the 56 eligible officials completed materials for the study. Two completed only the profile survey; two surveys and one California Psychological Inventory were removed from the study due to incomplete/random responses. The number of participants utilized for data analysis was 39.

The respondents ranged form 30 - 58 years of age with a mean age of 46.4 years (SD = 5.95 years). The majority of officials reported to be Caucasian (95%), and the remainder Black (5%). Among the respondents, 93% had a college degree; 38% had a graduate or professional degree. The mean number of years officiating in the SEC was 13.65 years (SD = 7.71 years), and 22.62 (SD = 6.77 years) was the mean number of years reported as a registered or licensed official in organized athletics; six reported to be currently officiating other sports on different levels. Each respondent had an average of 2.48 years of organized

coaching experience (SD = 5.18 years); eighty percent of the sample had varsity college football experience.

Instrumentation

A survey packet consisting of two instruments and a return envelope was mailed to each participant. The primary instrument, the California Psychological Inventory (CPI; Gough, 1975), is a personality inventory consisting of 480 True-False questions. The CPI is intended to be used for psychological diagnosis and evaluation of "normal" individuals with an emphasis on interpersonal relations (Gough, 1968). The instrument is designed to be administered individually or to a group, in person or by correspondence. The CPI consists of eighteen scales which are grouped into four categories. Interpreters may choose to use either the raw score, or a standard score (M = 50, SD = 10) for their basis of comparison. The manual, however, uses raw score mean and deviation values for its normative data (N = 6,200 adult males). The scales and their respective categories are as follows: Class I (Social poise and interpersonal functioning): Dominance, Capacity for Status, Sociability, Social Presence, Self-Acceptance, Well-Being; Class II (General adjustment and intrapersonal functioning): Responsibility, Socialization, Self-Control, Tolerance, Good-Impression, Communality; Class III (Achievement and intellectual ability): Achievement via Conformance, Achievement via Independence, Intellectual

Efficiency; and Class IV (General psychological functioning): Psychological Mindedness, Flexibility, and Femininity. Three of the scales are also used to assess faking or random responses, they are: Well-Being, Good-Impression, and Communality. All response patterns but one met the criteria for interpretation.

Gough (1975) provides a complete correlation matrix for all eighteen scales in the manual; the correlations range from -.30 to .78 and represent data collected from 9,187 subjects worldwide. Short term stability coefficients found by Hase and Goldberg (1967) ranged from .71 to .90 (Median = .83), with test-retest coefficients after one year in the .60s and .70s. The different scales may be evaluated according to the four classes outlined by the author, or as Megargee (1972) recommends in the CPI Handbook, by using a factor analytic approach using five classes. The present analysis was performed according to the recommendations of the author, using the four major class groupings.

The second instrument in the packet was a four page profile survey designed specifically for the study. It consisted of seventeen different open-ended questions designed to identify demographic data and experiences common to all SEC officials. For instance, "What aspects of officiating college football do you find most enjoyable?" and "What attributes do you believe are most essential for good officiating?". Officials were asked to

indicate their most prevalent feelings before, during, and after a ballgame.

Procedure

Differences between the officials and the normative population were analyzed using a single-sample *t*-test for each of the eighteen variable scales. Bonferroni's correction for multiple comparisons was used to maintain an experiment-wise error rate at the .05 level across all 18 comparisons. With this adjustment the hypothesis-wise error rate for each two-tailed comparison was estimated to be .0028, and thus, a critical value of $t(39) = 2.97$ (alpha = .0025) was identified as the most appropriate and sensitive meaure of significance (Neeter, Wasserman, & Kutner, 1985). Norms for the CPI were developed by consolidating nineteen different educational, occupational, and miscellaneous samples into a single composite for each sex (Gough, 1975). The officials' raw scores were compared with the scores of 6,200 male subjects representing a wide range of ages, socio-economic groups, and geographical areas. Group means and standard deviations are presented in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Results

Compared to the normative group, SEC Officials scored significantly higher ($p \leq .0025$) on Dominance, Social Presence, Self-Acceptance, Communality, Achievement via Conformance, and Psychological Mindedness. Their scores approached significance on: Capacity for Status, Sociability, Well-Being, and Flexibility. All but the latter, Flexibility, were in the positive direction.

The profile survey addressed a number of areas. When asked to indicate the most enjoyable aspects of officiating college football, the five most frequent responses, in order of occurrence, were: (1) competitive nature of Division I athletics, (2) comradery of other officials, (3) status within the athletic community, (4) pageantry of Division I competition, and (5) travel. The officials also indicated those aspects of officiating that they enjoyed least: (1) demands on family life, (2) evaluations, (3) travel/scheduling, (4) pressure from players and coaches, and (5) technical aspects of the game (see Tables 2 and 3). When asked to rank order sources of pressure, the officials indicated that they felt more self-generated pressure to do well than they did from any external source. Additional sources of pressure were coaches, conference officials, fans, players, and the media, respectively.

Insert Tables 2 and 3 about here

When asked to identify the three most prevalent feelings before, during and after a ballgame, the pattern was consistent. The most salient feeling was one of great confidence and assurance. Before and after the game, the officials believed that their next most prevalent feelings were, respectively, mental alertness and exhiliration. During the game, however, the officials reported these feelings to be transposed and combined with feelings of calm and relaxation.

Insert Table 4 about here

The attributes officials believed to be most essential for good officiating are as follows: (1) consistency, (2) knowledge, (3) ethics, (4) self-confidence, and (5) mental alertness. Ninety-six percent of the officials believed that the officiating in the Southeastern Conference was better than other conferences; 48% of the sample believed it to be much better.

Insert Table 5 about here

Discussion

Gough (1968) outlines a number of characteristics associated with the various scores for each scale in the Interpreter's Syllabus. Research cited previously reveals a pattern in the

profiles of college and professional officials. It has been demonstrated that the best officials differ from the general population in many significant ways (Alker, et al., 1973; Dale, 1976; Fratzke, 1975; Ress, 1982).

Consistent with Alker, et al. (1973), and Fratzke's (1975) findings, the SEC officials investigated in the present study seemed to demonstrate well developed qualities of leadership. They seemed to possess a strong sense of self-confidence and self-assurance, verve, spontaneity, and adherence to convention. The present study, different from other studies, presents evidence to support a preference for and genuine interest in working with other people.

Closer examination of the separate scaled scores indicates a relative strength among Class I variables. The officials scored extremely well on scales assessing initiative, leadership, and self-confidence. This strong tendency toward prosocial dominance may allow them to contribute to organizations in many valuable ways. They may, when the time is right, perform the role of a leader or use their skills in a supportive, team-oriented fashion. The group profile represents individuals with poise and an unshakable sense of self-worth. The fact that they chose "self-confident" as the second most likely descriptor of themselves supports this, as does the fact that they chose "confident and assured" as the most prevalent feelings before,

during, and after each ballgame. Behavioral support comes from their ability to remain cool and calm in the most heated of environments. The high scores on scales designed to identify verve, spontaneity, and general sociability imply a real interest and enjoyment in working with other people. An inability to calmly and effectively deal with people would preclude them from remaining in such a stressful environment for any extended period of time. And for the average SEC official, that means 22 years of organized officiating experience. This preference for others counters the popular belief that officials are cold and aloof, and oblivious to all but the game itself.

Although relatively low, all Class II scaled scores except one are consistent with those of the norm group, indicating that feelings of integrity, social maturity, and responsibility are in keeping with society's standards. Given the nature of their work, it is interesting that these scores are not higher. There are two scales, specifically, that seem to apply: Responsibility, which seeks to identify individuals who are articulate about rules and order, and Socialization, which is sensitive to the self-reported behavior of highly socialized and rule-respecting people (Gough, 1968). One hypothesis is that society's norms are very general and broad in scope, and may not represent the explicit norms of any given subgroup or organization, such as the SEC or even inter-collegiate athletics. This finding is to some extent

supported by Dale's (1976) work in which baseball umpires also scored relatively low in these areas. When asked to identify the five most accurate descriptors of themselves, the most frequently chosen response was "ethical".

Despite the relatively low Class II scaled scores, Communality is significantly higher, and may be examined along with the relatively high Class III scaled score, Achievement via Conformance. Together, both scores may be used to identify respondents who prefer to adhere to convention in their quest fot achievement. In a profession where consistency is the "hallmark of the trade," it was not surprising that "consistent" was chosen by the officials as the attribute most important to good officiating. Further, they chose it as the number three descriptor for themselves. As a group, they seem to prefer environments that are structured and well organized, ones in which the standards for excellence are well defined. Surprisingly, there was a strong sentiment against the primary method of encouraging conformance, the evaluation procedures. Not only were evaluations reported to be the second most unenjoyable aspect of officiating, but a number of respondents commented on the "politics" of the evaluation process. A need for achievement is further supported by their choice of "status within the athletic community" as the third most enjoyable aspect of officiating. Characteristic of the achievement scaled score is an implicit

ability to predict academic success, an ability that is verified ex-post facto, as 96% of the sample had a bachelors degree and 38% a graduate or professional degree. Other Class III variables are consistent with those of the norm group.

The Class IV scaled scores offer an interesting dichotomy. For example, the officials' significantly strong Psychological-Mindedness score implies an insightful and discerning temperament toward others. The fact that this score is paired with a somewhat high Sociability score (Class I) increases the likelihood that the officials are indeed responsive to the inner needs, motives, and experiences of others. The incisive and discerning temperament allows them to effectively anticipate and evaluate situations based on past experience. A relatively low Flexibility score suggests that the SEC officials may be a bit more rigid than the normative group; their temperament is less prone to influence by environmental factors, a trait that may very well be to their advantage when mediating opposing points of view in front of 70,000 screaming fans. The low Flexibility score is supported by their preference for conformity, their adherence to rules and convention, and their strong feelings of confidence in themselves.

In summary, Southeastern Conference football officials were sampled using the California Psychological Inventory and a background profile survey. A number of conclusions may be drawn

from this investigation. First, results suggest that as a group the SEC officials demonstrate well developed tendencies toward self-confidence, capacity for status, social presence, self-assurance, achievement via conformance, adherence to convention, and psychological mindedness. Secondly, the results are consistent with the work of Alker, et al. (1973) and Fratzke (1975) concerning basketball officials, and to a lesser extent, work done with baseball umpires (Dale, 1976). Despite their rigidity and preference for the status quo, the officials appear to be very warm and personable people; they enjoy working with others.

Third, they do not view their environment as threatening or even overly stressful. They feel calm, relaxed, and exhilirated while doing their job; their work energizes them. The longevity of their careers and the fact they chose "comradery among their peers" to be the second most enjoyable aspect of officiating imply a supportive and well developed working relationship among their peers.

A limitation of the study is that it does not directly address the issue of instant replay technology. While it is true that instant replays may be an asset in the decision making process, their use may also introduce other unwanted variables such as delay of game, the freedom to challenge judgment calls, and an increased reliance on the media. Despite the fact that the

investigation did not include "instant replays" as a separate source of pressure, they do represent a significant part of normal media coverage, and media ranked last among all possible sources of pressure felt by the officials. Instant replays was identified as a specific source of pressure by only one official.

It is recommended that future studies examine the impact and potential contributions of instant replays on the respective sports. It is further recommended that the differences between football, basketball, and baseball officials be investigated to determine if the differences are indeed due to their chosen profession, or to some other factor. It would also be interesting to determine why the officials as a group did not score above the mean in areas of Responsibility, Socialization, and Self-Control, given that they are directly responsible for the enforcement of all game-related rules. Finally, it would be helpful to all sports to determine the extent to which formal playing and coaching experience impact on the role of an athletic official.

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Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of CPI Scaled Scores

	Population		Sample		
Variable	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t-value
Dominance	26.8	5.1	33.69	5.15	8.44*
Capacity for Status	19.4	3.8	21.20	3.06	2.96*
Sociability	24.5	5.0	26.64	3.61	2.67
Social Presence	34.1	5.3	36.74	4.83	3.11*
Self-Acceptance	19.2	3.7	23.67	2.97	7.54*
Well-Being	37.5	4.0	38.87	3.46	2.14
Responsibility	31.1	5.0	30.20	3.85	-1.12
Socialization	36.7	5.6	37.92	4.46	1.36
Self-Control	31.0	7.4	31.05	7.45	.04
Tolerance	22.9	4.8	22.77	4.37	- .17
Good-Impression	20.0	6.0	19.23	5.82	- .80
Communality	25.2	2.2	26.69	1.15	4.23*
Achievement via Conformance	27.6	4.6	30.49	4.12	3.92*
Achievement via Independence	18.6	4.2	19.72	3.85	1.66

Table 1 (Continued)

Means and Standard Deviations of CPI Scaled Scores

	Population		Sample		
Variable	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t-value
Intellectual Efficiency	39.3	4.6	39.72	4.97	.57
Psychological Mindedness	11.0	2.8	12.33	2.38	2.97*
Flexibility	9.0	3.5	7.82	4.04	-2.10
Femininity	16.2	3.9	15.82	3.18	- .61

*$t(39) = \pm 2.97$, $p \leq .0025$.

Table 2

Most Enjoyable Aspects of Officiating College Football

Factor	n
Competitive Nature of Division I Athletics	34
Comradery of Other Officials	33
Status Within the Athletic Community	25
Pageantry of Division I Competition	20
Travel	15
Additional Income	13
Performing Before a Large Crowd	13
Technical Aspects of the Game	12
Post-Season Games	9
Other	9
Evaluation Results	5
Fringe Benefits	4
Off-Season Activities	2

Note. Each official was asked to indicate five aspects of officiating that he believed to be most enjoyable. $n = 40$.

Table 3

Most Unpleasant Aspects of Officiating College Football

Factor	n
Demands on Family Life	29
Evaluations	25
Pressure from Coaches/Players	22
Travel/Scheduling	21
Professional Aspect of College Football	18
Technical Aspects of the Game	15
Pressure from Fans	13
Off-Season Activities	10
Physical Demands of the Game	8
Wages	7
Other	7
Length of Season	3
Pageantry of Division I Competition	2

Note. Each official was asked to indicate five aspects of officiating that he believed to be least enjoyable. $n = 40$.

Table 4

Most Prevalent Feelings Before, During and After the Ballgame

Factor	Before	During	After
Anxious and somewhat uptight	11	3	1
Calm and relaxed	15	25	18
Confident and assured	33	34	30
Excited and exhilarated	24	26	24
Indifferent	1	1	1
Involved yet ambivalent	5	6	13
Mentally alert and perceptive	30	25	29
Inattentive and somewhat aloof	1	0	1
Other	0	0	3

Note. Officials were asked to indicate the three most prevalent feelings for each phase of the ballgame. $n = 40$.

Table 5

Officiating Attributes

Factor	n[a]	n[b]
Alert/Perceptive	26	19
Consistent	34	23
Flexible	7	8
Assertive	9	8
Ethical	30	33
Intelligent	10	17
Knowledgeable	31	22
Outgoing	0	14
Reserved/Controlled	13	17
Self-Confident	29	26
Socially Poised	1	7
Other	8	4

Note. Each official was asked to indicate five personal attributes. n = 40.

[a]Attributes that he believed were most essential to good officiating. [b]Attributes that he believed best described himslf.